

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – September 3, 2015

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Simon (Chair), Andrea Kornbluth, Elizabeth Lehmann, Arlene Schulman, Alyce Smith, Beatrice Hall (Public Member).

ABSENT: Wanda Garcia, Juan Mejia, Terriell Peters, Luis Tapia.

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Mary Anderson.

GUESTS: Cecil Corbin-Mark and Aurash Khawarзад, WEACT; Sara Fisher, Doris Giordano, Alaffe Gonzalez, Amina Lovell, John Damoulianos.

The meeting was called to order at 7:16 pm.

1. **Presentation on Northern Manhattan Climate Action plan** -- Cecil Corbin-Mark, Deputy Director, WEACT, distributed copies of the plan, which WEACT has been working on for the last several months. Two community meetings were held in Washington Heights-Inwood, two in Central and West Harlem, to discuss challenges residents faced in the climate change crisis – flooding, heat, etc. – and how the community should get together and become more resilient. Extreme heat and cold events were simulated. People were focused on energy insecurity and the need for improved communication and locally grown food. Next step: “take ideas and translate them into operational resources for the community.” He asked CB 12 to pass a resolution in support of the plan by December so that WEACT could use it as it requests additional funding to work on the plan.

Aurash Khawarзад, Policy Coordinator, WEACT, continued the presentation: Since low-income groups are most vulnerable to climate change, the plan also addresses issues of social inequality. Every idea has an environmental and economic component. There are four core ideas:

- Energy democracy: access to clean and reliable energy, access to air conditioning, solar panels, cooperatively-owned micro-grid separate from Con Edison. In WH-I, focus on area around Dyckman Houses.
- Energy preparedness: communication systems so you know who to call in case of emergency.
- Social hubs: central place in community where people can be educated around energy issues.
- Public participation: increasing level of environmental awareness and people's power on how decisions are made; participatory budgeting; activist trainings.

Better infrastructure is needed, more flood-proofing, carbon-neutral transportation.

Corbin-Mark concluded by saying that WEACT is waiting to hear if it will receive funding to implement these ideas and will be forming community-based working groups in the next two months.

2. **Discussion regarding City Council bill to reduce the use of carryout bags in retail stores, groceries and supermarkets (Intro. 209)** – S. Simon reported that he spoke to the chief of staff for Council Member Chin, one of the prime sponsors of the bill, who said the bill is still pending in the Council. The committee discussed the provisions of the bill requiring the free distribution of reusable bags in low-income communities and the exemption of food-stamp and WIC clients, the use of plastic bags by some people for household garbage, the need to clarify that the fee should not exceed 10 cents, among other issues. It was agreed that the resolution passed by the committee in February should be revised and considered at a future meeting.
3. **Preliminary discussion on FY 17 Expense and Capital Budget Priorities** – The committee reviewed its FY 16 budget priorities and agreed that the ideas in the WEACT Climate Action plan should be looked at for possible new budget items. Additional recommendations included HIV/AIDS education and clinic, funding for supplemental street cleaning services by the Doe Fund, a permanent EMS base station.
4. **Isabella Geriatric Center Report** – Betty Lehmann, Director of Marketing & Communications, reported that the annual health fair will be held Wednesday, 10/7 at 10-3 p.m.

5. **Old Business** – S. Simon reported that the NYC Clean Heat program has been very successful in our community. Of the 459 buildings that were required to convert from #6 fuel oil to cleaner fuels as of July 1, only one building, 495 W. 186th St., apparently has not completed its conversion nor is in the process of doing so.

S. Simon: NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation informed me that the developer of 2420 & 2430 Amsterdam Avenue notified DEC that it is finalizing the design of the buildings, which may alter the Remedial Investigation Work Plan for the brownfield remediation at the site. The current schedule is for the field work to begin in November. He said he is trying to obtain information on the status of the remediation work to be done at 153-157 Sherman Ave., where The Equity Project charter school is to be built.

6. **New Business** -- S. Fisher urged the committee to consider various issues: legislation on the sale and use of hookahs; noise levels from bars and restaurants, especially in Inwood; air and water quality; use of pesticides in parks.

D. Giordano said she is concerned about ambulances idling outside the Milstein Hospital building and the fumes being trapped inside the covered driveway.

7. **Announcements** – M. Anderson: People's Theater Project shows on 11/6 and 11/7.
S. Fisher: WEACT monthly meeting on 9/12. Friends of Inwood Hill Park is participating in the Parks Department's tree count.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Steve Simon